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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8873
INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 018848

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE, S/CT, CA/OCS

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 569/93

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

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SUBJECT: POSSIBLE RELEASE OF U.S. HOSTAGE HELD BY PKK

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: THE PKK HAS TOLD A ROME-BASED VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION, THE SANT'EGIDIO SOCIETY, THAT IT IS WILLING TO RELEASE A U.S. HOSTAGE TO A SANT'EGIDIO REPRESENTATIVE ACCOMPANIED BY A U.S. OFFICIAL. SANT'EGIDIO HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN SECURING RELEASE OF FOREIGNERS HELD BY THE PKK. THIS MESSAGE REQUESTS GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

13. ON 28 OCTOBER A CONTACT AT ROME'S SANT'EGIDIO SOCIETY TOLD EMBASSY VATICAN DCM THAT THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE PKK HAD EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO RELEASE A U.S. HOSTAGE BEING HELD BY THE PKK. HE DESCRIBED THE INDIVIDUAL AS A MR. STARGER, AN ENGLISH TEACHER WHO HAD BEEN WORKING IN ISTANBUL. STARGER WAS BEING HELD IN A GROUP THAT INCLUDED A COLLEAGUE OF HIS FROM NEW ZEALAND AND AN UNIDENTIFIED DUTCHMAN.

14. THE PKK OFFER HAD BEEN MADE TO ANDREA RICCARDI, HEAD OF THE SANT'EGIDIO SOCIETY, DURING A CONVERSATION THE PREVIOUS WEEK IN DAMASCUS. THE PKK SAID THEY WOULD RELEASE STARGER, AND PRESUMABLY THE OTHER TWO HOSTAGES, TO AN EMISSARY OF SANT'EGIDIO AND A U.S. OFFICIAL. RICCARDI ASKED IF THE RELEASE COULD BE DONE IN LEBANON OR SYRIA, BUT PKK INSISTED THAT THEY ONLY FELT SAFE OFFERING THE RELEASE IN TURKEY.

15. NOTE: SANT'EGIDIO IS A ROME BASED VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION WELL-KNOWN TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. RICCARDI WAS ONE OF THE MEDIATORS IN THE PEACE PROCESS LEADING TO THE END OF THE MOZAMBIKAN CIVIL WAR. ANOTHER OF THE MEDIATORS, DON MATTEO ZUPPI, WAS SENT TO EASTERN TURKEY IN SEPTEMBER TO RECEIVE THE RELEASE OF AN EARLIER GROUP OF HOSTAGES (SEVERAL ITALIANS, A NEW ZEALANDER, AND A GERMAN). END NOTE.

16. DCM ASKED IF SANT'EGIDIO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ANYONE ELSE ON THIS OFFER. THE NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR IN ROME, PETER BENNETT, HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE PKK MESSAGE AND WAS SEEKING INSTRUCTIONS FROM WELLINGTON. DCM ASKED WHETHER THE PKK HAD MADE ANY COMMENT ON THE LEVEL OF REPRESENTATIVE TO WHOM THEY WOULD RELEASE STARGER, WHETHER A NON-OFFICIAL AMERICAN MIGHT SUFFICE, OR WHETHER IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO SECURE RELEASE SIMPLY TO A SANT'EGIDIO REPRESENTATIVE. CONTACT SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT, BUT HE JUDGED THAT A REPRESENTATIVE AT LESS THAN AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL WOULD SUFFICE. HE DID NOT KNOW IF THE PRESENCE OF AN AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE WOULD BE ESSENTIAL.

17. DCM SAID HE WOULD REPORT THIS INFORMATION TO WASHINGTON AND SEEK GUIDANCE. HE CAUTIONED THAT WASHINGTON WOULD SCRUTINIZE ANY RELEASE SCENARIO RIGOROUSLY TO AVOID CONFLICT WITH STRONG U.S. POLICY ON TERRORISM.

18. DCM SPOKE WITH NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR BENNETT EARLY 29 OCTOBER. BENNETT CONFIRMED HIS CONTACT WITH SANT'EGIDIO. HE SAID THAT THE SEPTEMBER HOSTAGE RELEASE BY THE PKK HAD NOT INCLUDED AN OFFICIAL PRESENCE, BUT

THERE HAD BEEN MUCH PUBLICITY ON ITALIAN AND GERMAN
TELEVISION. BENNETT, WHO EXPRESSED A KEEN DESIRE TO
STAY IN TOUCH ON DEVELOPMENTS, SAID U.S. AND NEW ZEALAND
AUTHORITIES IN ANKARA WERE IN CONTACT ON THIS ISSUE.

FLYNN